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BT 605 X1 Old Testament Theology

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Asbury Theological Seminary
BT605X1 Old Testament Theology: Summer 2008

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(unless otherwise announced)

Course Description (ATS catalog)

“Considers representative theological themes and their historical development in the Old Testament employing methodology of the contemporary biblical theology discipline.
Prerequisites: OT520, NT(IBS)510 or 511.”

Welcome

Welcome to BT605! People approach the Old Testament (and the Bible in general) with all sorts of interests and questions. For example: How do its claims compare with those made by modern history or science? What accounts for the longevity of its impact on western culture? What features account for its aesthetic beauty – its uniqueness as a literary work of art? What secrets does it hold concerning future events? What promises can I appropriate in order to lead a more satisfying life? Studying Holy Scripture can truly be exciting... particularly when we aim to read not merely to gain information, but to realize God’s higher purpose of transformation! Perhaps you grew up in the church and first learned Bible stories through flannel graph (as I did). Perhaps you came to faith in Christ later in life as an adult. At any rate, as we are gathered this summer to explore the Old Testament together, the questions that will underlie this exploration are expressly *theological* in nature (as the course title suggests): What does the OT affirm about God? What does it affirm about the people of God? Because of our theological perspective toward the text, additional (often implicit) questions are pertinent to our study. There may be little need to defend or explain the use of the New Testament as “Christian” Scripture, but what about the OT? *Why* has the church, since its inception, read these Jewish texts as Christian Scripture? *How* should the OT be interpreted and used? I do look forward to our common journey this summer. At this particular time in our lives, I pray that we will all be attentive to God’s voice as he speaks to us through his living word.

Personal Introduction

I look forward to getting to know you and hearing of the particular paths through which God has called you to serve in Christian ministry. My undergraduate degrees are in the areas of finance and government. I could not have foreseen at that early stage that God would eventually lead me to leave a job in the tax software industry and answer a call to ministry. My subsequent years at Asbury Theological Seminary (MDiv 2000, M.A. Biblical Studies, 2002) would prove formative and deeply enriching. I was blessed to meet my future wife, Sarah, there. She is currently a commissioned deacon in the United

Methodist Church, Kentucky Conference. In September 2007 (on the day of our 6th anniversary) we welcomed the arrival of our first child, Samuel. From 2002-06, we lived in Scotland where I completed my PhD studies at the University of Aberdeen, under the supervision of Prof. Francis Watson. My dissertation was entitled “Irenaeus and Genesis: A Study of Competition in Early Christian Hermeneutics.” So if I occasionally bring up my “friend” Irenaeus (a 2nd century bishop in the church) it is only because I feel as though he has taught me a lot over the last few years. I am currently assistant professor of religion at Spring Arbor University (south-central Michigan) where my teaching primarily involves courses in OT studies and Patristic theology. We attend First United Methodist Church in Jackson, Michigan.

Objectives: General

This course seeks to contribute to the five-fold purpose for all courses in the School of Biblical Interpretation and Proclamation (see ATS catalog):

- A. “to acquaint the student with the tools for Bible study
- B. to enable the student to build a biblical foundation for theology and practice
- C. to encourage the development of an integrated method for Bible study
- D. to foster a commitment to a lifelong study of the Bible and to its use in Christian ministry
- E. to proclaim effectively and with biblical, theological, and historical integrity, the message of the Scriptures to the contemporary world.”

Objectives: Specific

Having successfully completed this course...

1. You will gain a greater aptitude for reading Old Testament passages *canonically* in Christian Scripture and *theologically* within the wider context of orthodox Christian tradition.
2. You will be better able to assess various *critical* approaches to Old Testament interpretation and appropriation. Certain contemporary reading strategies, exemplified in particular historical-critical and post-modern approaches, will be studied and evaluated.
3. You will be able to recognize various literary genres operative in the Old Testament and will develop skill in interpreting them in manners appropriate to their forms.
4. You will read Old Testament texts having become more familiar with their historical and cultural contexts in the world of the Ancient Near East. Selected representative topics will be studied.
5. You will become more adept at wrestling with the possible meanings of particular biblical texts (given literary, historical, and canonical contexts), with a view toward exploring their interactions with larger theological motifs (e.g., creation) operative in the OT.

Expectations

What you can expect of me:

1. Prompt replies to questions (normally within 36 hours) and postings (twice per week).
2. Interaction, participation, and direction in the ongoing discussions that will occur over the course of the semester.

3. Prompt feedback and assessment on assignments. For assessments of student work during the course of the academic term, the expectation of "timely" feedback is met when students have their work marked, graded, and returned within one week of its submission; in the case of classes enrolling more than 40 students, two weeks. Moreover, when assignment "B" builds on assignment "A," assignment "A" should be returned before assignment "B" falls due. Longer assignments are often due at the end of term, and are not subject to this definition. For assessments of student work during the course of the academic term, the expectation of "substantive" feedback is met when students receive responses that alert them to what they have done well and how they might improve their performance in subsequent work.
4. Occasional bloopers as I continue to learn this mode of teaching and interact with the class.

What I expect of you:

1. Participation in the discussion in the online forum(s).
2. On-time completion of assignments.
3. Your honest questions when you don't understand the material or the instructions.
4. Your patience as we work together in this medium.

Submitting Your Work

Beginnings and Endings: Our course will begin on June 2, 2008. It will officially end (communication will come to a close) on Friday, August 22, 2008. You will receive an exit correspondence from me on that day. You will not be able to submit anything to me after 11:59 PM (ET) on August 22.

Please submit your responses to the appropriate forum. When you name them be sure to use your last name in the title of your response. All work is to be submitted in 12 pt., Times New Roman type with 1-inch margins using Microsoft Word.

- **Assignments:** All assignments are due by the stated due dates. Turning in assignments on time is a high priority. Late assignments will be penalized 10 points per day.
- **Postings:** Postings in the online forum(s) should be limited to the number of words established for the particular assignment.
- **Discussion:** A crucial element of this course is the dialogue that we enter into with each other. All discussions are to be in the spirit of respect, encouragement, gentleness, patience, persistence, and hope. This does not mean that we will not challenge, confront, or question each other. It does mean that these things will be undertaken for the purpose of growth and stimulation to think and understand the subject at hand more deeply and more intimately.

Online Section Descriptions and Communication Guidelines

The Virtual Classroom is built upon the open-source Moodle platform. By logging into <http://virtual.asburyseminary.edu> you will have access to this course and be able to collaborate with participant-colleagues and me throughout the course. The following are functions with which you should familiarize yourself:

1. The **Course Information Center** contains many features to be used throughout the semester:
 - a) **Course News and Announcements**, where I will post items important for the entire class;
 - b) **Syllabus**, where a copy of the syllabus is provided;
 - c) **To Professor**, which is a way for you to post a message directly to me and we can discuss an issue privately;
 - d) **Course Questions**, which is a public forum where you can publicly post any questions you have regarding the course so others may see your message and respond. Anytime you have a question or comment about the course, the schedule, the assignments, or anything else that may be of interest to other participants and me you should post it to the Course Questions Forum;
 - e) **Prayer Forum**, which is a public forum where you can post prayer concerns and praises for all to see. This is a way for us to build community;
 - f) **Open Forum**, which is a public forum where you can post anything that is not course-related for all to see. Examples include someone getting married, an upcoming birthday, discussions on topics not course-related, etc. This is a way for us to build community.
2. **Modules**, which are located below the Course Information Center, will contain forums where group discussions will take place, documents or other files to download or view online, and assignment links where you will post your assignments to me. Modules will be clearly labeled so you can follow along during the semester.
3. **Resources**, a section located on the left side, provides links to items you may want to use often in the semester.

Virtual Support Contact Information

For **technical support, library research support, library loans, and Virtual media** contact Information Commons: Info_Commons@asburyseminary.edu Phone: (859) 858-2233; Toll-free: (866) 454-2733

For **general questions and administrative assistance regarding the Virtual program**, contact Dale Hale: ExL_Office@asburyseminary.edu Phone: (859) 858-2393

Accessing Information Commons Materials

1. General Questions:

a. The Information Commons is a "one-stop shop" for all student research, circulation and technical needs. The Information Commons hours are posted here:
<http://www.asburyseminary.edu/information/hours.htm>

2. Materials Requests:

a. To search the library catalog for available materials, click here:
<http://www.asburyseminary.edu/information/index.htm>

b. Virtual Students may request books, photocopies or emailed attachments of journal articles/portions of reference books from Asbury Seminary's Library. Please allow 3-10 business days for all requests to be filled. Contact the Information Commons for costs and instructions on how to make requests.

c. Virtual students are encouraged to make use of local library resources. Students who live within a 50 mile radius of either the Florida or the Kentucky campus should come to campus to obtain their materials.

3. Research Questions:

a. Virtual students are encouraged to contact the Information Commons for research assistance including help determining the best sources to use for a paper, finding book reviews, or research questions about using the online databases or any other library materials.

4. Online Databases:

a. To access the online library resources including the library catalog and full-text journal databases, go to <http://www.asburyseminary.edu/information/index.htm> and enter your 10-digit student ID# number in the login box. Your student ID# is provided on the biographical information section of the student registration webpage. Add a 2 and enough 0's to the front to make a 10-digit number (20000XXXXX where XXXXX = your student id).

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Course Requirements

This course will require a time commitment of up to 12 hours of work **per week**. This is based on the Asbury Seminary standard of three hours of "in class" time plus up to three hours of outside work for each hour in class.

- 1. Preparation, Attendance, and Participation:** Attendance in the virtual classroom is expected and will be recorded. Last minute, hasty, one word or short 'attaboys' are not acceptable evidence for participation. Students who fail to engage in the classroom discussions and group projects will not be allowed to complete the course. Students are expected to be prepared by completing reading and assignments prior to engaging in the virtual classroom discussions. Each student has the opportunity to participate in virtual classroom and group discussions and projects. After the close of each module, I will send you an update of the number of points earned on the basis of your participation in the class discussion through postings. In each module, you may earn up to 40 points.
- 2. Individual Assignments:** These three assignments are to be your own work (no collaboration with others). Detailed instructions and guidelines for each may be found in the module forum.
- 3. Group Assignments:** Three assignments based on work as a team will be submitted. The teams are assigned in the team forum. In the case of each group assignment, each team will be required to work together in the developing the group posting. Group postings must be posted on time in order for the next group to respond depending on the particular group project assigned. Each assignment is worth 100 points. Grading will be assigned not only based on the final group posting, but *also* on each team member's contribution (based on postings in the team forum).

4. **Reading Report:** When you submit your final exam (deadline: Wednesday, August 20, 11:59 PM), please indicate to me the percentage of the required course readings that you completed.
5. **Final Exam:** The final exam is designed to give you the opportunity to synthesize what you have learned from the assigned course readings. Essay questions will ask for your analysis of and reflection upon particular biblical texts in light of the canonical and conceptual contexts in which they are situated. Students will also be expected to demonstrate awareness of their own interpretive locations as they approach the task of reading the Old Testament theologically. This exam will be “open book.”

Evaluation

Grade Weighting

Preparation, Attendance, and Participation (40 points possible for each module)	200 points
Group Assignments (3)	300 points
Individual Assignments (3)	200 points
Reading Report	100 points
Final Exam	200 points
TOTAL	1000 points

Grade Scale

A (940-1000)	B- (800-829)	D+ (670-699)
A- (900-939)	C+ (770-799)	D (630-669)
B+ (870-899)	C (730-769)	D- (600-629)
B (830-869)	C- (700-729)	F (0-599)

Grade Definitions (see ATS catalog, p. 24)

A= Exceptional work: outstanding or surpassing achievement of course objectives
 B= Good work: substantial achievement of course objectives
 C= Acceptable work: essential achievement of course objectives
 D= Marginal work: minimal or inadequate achievement of course objectives
 F= Unacceptable work: failure of course work

A plus (+) or minus (–) indicates positions between categories (for example, B+ = very good; C– = slightly below acceptable, etc.).

Course Textbooks (Required Reading)

1. Bible in a modern translation
 - The New Revised Standard Version [NRSV] is preferred. However the NIV, RSV, NASB, or ESV may be used, though *not* the King James Version.
2. Bartholomew, Craig G., ed. et al. *Canon and Biblical Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006. ISBN 0310234174.

3. Childs, Brevard S. *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1985. ISBN 0800627725.
4. Brueggemann, Walter. *The Prophetic Imagination* (2nd edition). Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001. ISBN 0800632807.
5. Collins, John J. *The Bible after Babel*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005. ISBN 0802828922.
6. Fretheim, Terence E. *God and World in the Old Testament*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2005. ISBN 0687342961.
7. Walton, John H. *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006. ISBN 0801027500.

Course Modules

Module 1: “Contexts” of Contemporary OT Interpreters (June 2-15)

Required Reading:

- Collins, *The Bible after Babel*, pp. 1-161.
- Bartholomew, ed. et al, *Canon and Biblical Interpretation*
 - “Canon, Community and Theological Construction” (Thiselton: pp. 1-24)
 - “The Canon in Recent Biblical Studies: Reflections on an Era” (Childs: pp. 33-56)
 - “The Canonical Approach and Theological Interpretation” (Seitz: pp. 58-110)
 - “Reclaiming Inspiration for the Bible” (Chapman: pp. 167-206)

Recommended Reading:

Bartholomew, ed. et al, *Canon and Biblical Interpretation*; chapters 7-8 (pp. 207-254).

Assignments:

- *Assignment 1-1*: Please write a paragraph of personal introduction so that I and the rest of the class may get to know you a bit. (Include whatever biographical details you deem relevant or interesting.) Along with this, please briefly respond to the following two questions:
 - In Luke 24:44, Jesus says that “everything written **about me** in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” How should we understand this claim about the Old Testament?
 - Why might it be (if a recent survey is to be believed) that around 80% of church sermons are based on **New** Testament texts?
 - Due Wednesday, June 4, 11:59 PM; Post to module forum (Total length: approximately 400-500 words; worth 25 points)

- *Class discussion:* Based on the module readings, I will post a question(s) for our consideration each Monday morning. (*Note the need to keep current with assigned readings* [e.g., have approximately half of readings done when halfway through module, etc.].) Please:
 - Post your own 200 word (or so) response to the question raised
 - Due Friday 11:59 PM of that week (Post to module forum)
 - Post *substantive* responses to the postings of *at least* three (3) other class members (approx. 100 words for *each* response)
 - Due the upcoming Sunday 11:59 PM, though preferably earlier.
 - On the next day (Monday), I will post a summary of the class discussion and then respond to this myself, before raising the new weekly discussion question.

Module 2: Conceptual “Context” of the Ancient Near East (June 16-29)

Required Reading:

- Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, pp. 15-334.

Assignments:

- *Assignment 2-1* (Individual): Please write a letter to an imaginary friend who insists that the OT is fully explainable as a mere “cultural artifact.” As for the content of the letter, please choose one of three topics (from Walton) that are posted in this module’s instructions. These topics, along with more detailed guidelines, will be available at the beginning of the first week of the module.
 - Due Sunday, June 29 11:59 PM. (Length: approx. 800 words; worth 100 points)
- *Class discussion:* Based on the module readings, I will post a question(s) for our consideration **each** Monday morning. (*Note the need to keep current with assigned readings* [e.g., have approximately half of readings done when halfway through module, etc.].) Please:
 - Post your own 200 word (or so) response to the question raised
 - Due Friday 11:59 PM of that week
 - Post *substantive* responses to the postings of *at least* three (3) other class members (approx. 100 words for *each* response)
 - Due the upcoming Sunday 11:59 PM, though preferably earlier.

Module 3: Old Testament Theology - Methods Applied (I) (June 30-July 13)

Required Reading:

- Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 5, preface through chapter 16.
 - An English translation of this text (*Ante-Nicene Fathers* edition) is available in the public domain at: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.ix.vii.i.html>
- Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context*, pp. 1-247.

Recommended Reading:

- Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 1, preface through chapter 11.
 - Available in public domain at:
<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.ix.ii.i.html>

Assignments:

- *Assignment 3-1* (Team Project): Point/Counterpoint/Synthesis (100 points)
 - Team A will argue in defense of Irenaeus' interpretation / use of Gen 2:7. (You may choose to focus on one example, noting relevant hermeneutical as well as theological issues – see module instructions.)
 - Due Thursday, July 10, 11:59 PM; Length: 750 words
 - Team B will argue that Irenaeus' interpretation / use of Gen 2:7 is inappropriate by raising points of concern with Irenaeus' methodology or theology (see module instructions)
 - Due Thursday, July 10, 11:59 PM; Length: 750 words
 - Team C will summarize and weigh both sides of the argument before offering their own conclusions.
 - Due Sunday, July 13, 11:59 PM; Length: 750 words
- *Class discussion*: Based on the module readings, I will post a question(s) for our consideration **each** Monday morning. Please:
 - Post your own 200 word response to the question raised
 - Due Friday 11:59 PM of that week
 - Post *substantive* responses to the postings of at least three (3) other class members (approx. 100 words for *each* response)
 - Due the upcoming Sunday 11:59 PM

Module 4: Old Testament Theology - Methods Applied (II) (July 14-August 3)

Required Reading:

1. Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament*, pp. ix-284
2. Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, pp. ix-125

Assignments:

1. *Assignment 4-1* (Individual): Please offer your assessment of Fretheim, along the lines of these three components:
 - a. *Summarize*: What are some of the primary theological claims made by this interpreter based on his/her reading of the OT? See module instructions for details.
 - b. *Analyze*: What hermeneutical method(s) and assumptions underlie the interpreter's approach to the OT?
 - c. *Evaluate*: Is this approach worthy of emulation? (i.e., Is it faithful? responsible? responsive? other criteria?)
 - Total length: approx. 750 words; worth 75 points
 - Due **Friday**, July 25 11:59 PM

2. *Assignment 4-2 (Team Project): Point/Counterpoint/Synthesis (100 points)*
 - a. Team C will argue in favor of Brueggemann's thesis that the OT expresses a tension between the "royal consciousness" and "prophetic imagination." Please cite supporting evidence to identify and defend the interpreter's hermeneutical and theological assumptions.
 - i. Due Friday, August 1, 11:59 PM; Length: 1000 words
 - b. Team A will argue against Brueggemann's thesis that the OT expresses a tension between the "royal consciousness" and "prophetic imagination." Please cite supporting evidence to identify and rebut the interpreter's hermeneutical and theological assumptions.
 - i. Due Friday, August 1, 11:59 PM; Length: 1000 words
 - c. Team B will summarize and weigh both sides of the argument before offering their own conclusions.
 - i. Due Monday, August 4, 11:59 PM; Length: 750 words
3. *Class discussion:* Based on the module readings, I will post a question(s) for our consideration **each** Monday morning. (*Note the need to keep current with assigned readings [e.g., have approximately 1/3 of readings done when 1/3 through module, etc.]*) Please:
 - a. Post your own 200 word response to the question raised
 - i. Due Friday 11:59 PM of that week
 - b. Post *substantive* responses to the postings of *at least* three (3) other class members (approx. 100 words for *each* response)
 - i. Due the upcoming Sunday 11:59 PM

Module 5: Canonical Readings of the OT - Evaluating Test Cases (August 4-17)

Required Reading:

1. Bartholomew, ed. et al, *Canon and Biblical Interpretation*
 - a. "Old Testament Laws and Canonical Intentionality" (McConville: pp. 259-281)
 - b. "Response to Gordon McConville" (Wright: pp. 282-292)
 - c. "The Prophets, the Canon and a Canonical Approach: No Empty Word" (Dempster: pp. 293-332)
 - d. "Toward a Canonical Reading of the Psalms" (Wenham: pp. 333-351)
 - e. "Reading Wisdom Canonically" (Longman: pp. 352-373)
 - f. "Wisdom as Canonical Imagination: Pleasant Words for Tremper Longman" (O'Dowd: pp. 374-392)
 - g. "Prolegomena to Christian Theological Interpretations of Lamentations" (Parry: pp. 393-418)

Assignments:

1. *Assignment 5-1 (Team):* Each team will be assigned one of the three divisions of the Hebrew Bible. As a team, please respond to the questions posted in the module five instructions, in light of the "focal texts" provided and the issues raised by the related essays in the Bartholomew volume.

- Team B: Torah
 - Team C: Prophets
 - Team A: Writings
 - Due Sunday, August 17, 11:59 PM; Length: approx. 1000 words (worth 100 points).
2. *Class discussion:* Based on the module readings, I will post a question(s) for our consideration **each** Monday morning. Please:
- a. Post your own 200 word response to the question raised
 - i. Due Friday 11:59 PM of that week
 - b. Post *substantive* responses to the postings of **at least** three (3) other class members (approx. 100 words for *each* response)
 - i. Due the upcoming Sunday 11:59 PM

Final Exam (August 18-20)

The final exam will be posted Monday, August 18, 8:00 AM. As this is an “open book” exam, you may make use of primary and secondary sources (i.e., Bible, course textbooks). However, you must be careful to properly cite any sources which you draw upon. Exams will be checked for plagiarism.

- Due Wednesday, August 20 at 11:59 PM

Select Bibliography

Adam, A. K. M., Stephen Fowl, Kevin Vanhoozer, Francis Watson. *Reading Scripture with the Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006.

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Bowden. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985.
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